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**MADAGASCAR**

# SUCCESS STORY

## Rainforests Can Bring Benefit to All

### **Parks demonstrate how resource management can improve livelihoods**



Photo: USAID/Madagascar

USAID is helping protect Madagascar's rainforest, home to a number of unique animals, including 25 species of lemurs.

***"Congratulations to all because it's one step further for the country in conserving our biodiversity, which is now known as having a universally exceptional value," said Fanjatiana Ratsimba of the UNESCO World Heritage Program, Madagascar.***

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USAID's assistance has jumpstarted the protection of primary forest along Madagascar's eastern edge, supporting the creation of six national parks and swaths of protected forest areas.

Acknowledging these rainforests' unique biodiversity, the UNESCO Committee on World Heritage Sites inscribed Madagascar's Atsinanana ("Eastern") rainforests jointly as a natural World Heritage Site. The inclusion of the rainforests both validates and reinforces USAID's ongoing efforts to protect the island's unique natural environment.

The committee chose the Atsinanana forests for their role in providing the ecological processes necessary to maintain the island's extraordinary biodiversity. Particularly unique to the rainforests are the mammals, 72 species of which are endangered. The forests also include at least 25 lemur species.

Beginning in 1989, USAID supported the Government of Madagascar in developing the Madagascar National Environmental Action Plan, one of Africa's first. Among other elements of the plan, USAID helped finance the protection of six areas within the Atsinanana belt of forest. Each protected area aimed to conserve biodiversity, and generate tourist revenue to improve Malagasy livelihoods.

By working to build governance and resource management capacities, USAID supported the Malagasy government in developing all six protected areas into national parks. USAID also ensured that park boundaries were drawn with community participation and that communities received support during negotiations over park revenues. Communities bordering the park continue to have limited user rights within the park and 50 percent of park revenues pass directly to the community.

For Atsinanana's protected areas, both goals have seen success on the ground. The six national parks of Atsinanana took in a significant portion of the island-wide tourist visits to national parks. With half of these rising tourist revenues distributed to surrounding communities, local residents have an increasingly strong incentive to protect neighboring biodiversity.